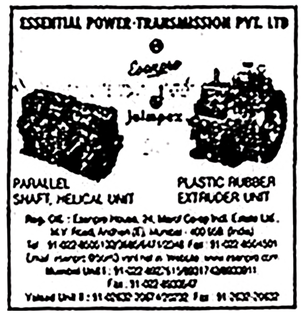

Pessimism, when you get used to it is just as agreeable as optimism
— Arnold Bennett

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INTERNATIONAL

Upper caste Indian male more European, says study

By Chidanand Rajghatta

WASHINGTON: The upper caste Indian male population is genetically closer to Europeans than the lower castes, which are more "Asian," according to a potentially controversial new study being published in the forthcoming issue of the journal *Human Genome*.

The authors of the study say their findings support historical data indicating that West Eurasians migrating into india during the last 10,000 years were mostly male. An analysis of the genetic material also shows that the "ancestors of Indian men and women came from different parts of the world," says Michael Bamstad of the University of Utah, who led the research group.

The researchers say this difference in gender and genetic make-up may also hold the key to the origin of the caste system. The migrating or invading male population left descendants in the higher than lower castes and may have even devised the caste system, Bamstad said in an interview with this correspondent on Thursday.

Bamstad's study showed that each caste's mitochondrial DNA, which is derived from the mother only, has a greater similarity to Asians than to Europeans, but the upper castes show less similarity than do the lower castes.

Conversely, Y-chromosome data, derived from the father only, show each caste more similar to Europeans, with the upper castes being most similar, probably because more Eurasian males migrated to India than did Eurasian females.

Such a finding could also imply that the women of the sub-continent are more Indian than are men.

To "increase the power of the study." Bamstad and his associates also examined 40 additional genes that are inherited from the father and the mother. All of these data strongly supported the conclusion that upper castes have a higher genetic similarity to Europeans than do lower castes, the study says.

"These are potentially controversial results," Bamstad said. "But we are able to demonstrate unequivocally that the upper castes are more similar to Europeans than lower castes, and that women are more mobile — mostly upwardly — in the caste system."

The study in fact says the genetic distance is closest between Europeans and Brahmins (0.10) followed by Kshatriyas (0.12) and Vaishyas (0.16).

"Assuming that contemporary Europeans reflect West Eurasian affinities; these data indicate that the amount of West Eurasian admixture with Indian population may have been proportionate to caste rank," the study says.

Bamstad's collaborators in the study include researchers from the Andhra University, University of Madras and the Anthropological Survey of India. The group has done work in this area before. In a previously published paper in Nature magazine, Bamstad's team said each Indian caste had developed a distinctive genetic profile, particularly among men, and more so when there was little intermarriage. But the women's genes suggested greater social mobility.

The discovery suggests that women on occasion marry men from higher castes producing children that have their husbands' social rank, the researchers said, claiming the "stratification of the Hindu caste system is driven by women."

Tilt a pressure cooker

Indian diplomat flayed for lobbying

COLOMBO: Indian deputy high commissioner in Colombo S. Tripathi has been criticised for allegedly "breaking diplomatic norms" by lobbying a local magistrate on behalf of 39 Indian fishermen arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy.

Mr Tripathi allegedly sought an appointment with R.T. Vignaraja, the magistrate in the northern Jaffna peninsula, to request him to see to the welfare of the Indian nationals, the *Sunday Times* newspaper said. "Judicial sources said it was not correct for the diplomat to visit the magistrate while a case was pending regarding the fishermen," the newspaper reported.

According to the report, the envoy had requested the magistrate "to give extra facilities to the Indian detainees and protect their fishing gear." There was no immediate comment from the Indian high commission. Tripathi and defence advisor Gopi Nath flew to Jaffna last week to meet the fishermen in the high-security Jaffna prison. The navy had arrested them for poaching in Sri Lankan

AROUND THE WORLD

Chelsea may attend Oxford

NEW YORK: Former first-daughter, Chelsea Clinton, has contacted Oxford University about possibly attending the school where her father studied politics as a Rhodes scholar, *The Daily News* reported Saturday. "She has been considering various options, and one of those options is Oxford," an unnamed spokesman for the university said. "We haven't been told whether she is definitively coming in the fall."

The spokesman said Clinton hadn't formally applied, but indicated that would be a mere formality.

Teens whipped for harassing women

RIYADH: Saudi police have whipped seven teenage boys after charging them with leering at women in the conservative Muslim kingdom, the newspaper *Al-Eqtisadiah* reported on Wednes

cational punishment."

It said the boys were nabbed at various shopping malls for following women around, trying to talk to them, passing on phone numbers or just winking or whistling at the opposite sex.

Showering with celebrities?

TORONTO: Two out of three people in Canada's largest city would rather take a shower with a beautiful celebrity than with their partners, a survey taken in April and May reveals. But one in three respondents in Toronto, with more women in this category than men, would prefer a shower with their life partners than with the likes of Pamela Anderson, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Brad Pitt or Russell Crowe.

"I'm not surprised," said lifestyles counsellor Carol Wise, who analysed the results of the survey of 360 people. "A shower is the ultimate definition of intimacy. In a few blissful sudsy moments, a loving connection can be made. no words necessary," Wise said.

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